

South La Crosse transportation study

Establishing a long-term corridor vision

December 2004

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), city of La Crosse and town of Shelby are working together to identify a long-term vision for the future of South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road.

The area under evaluation includes South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road from the junction with Green Bay Street (by Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center) to the intersection of US 14/61/WIS 35. Two additional highway segments will also be examined:

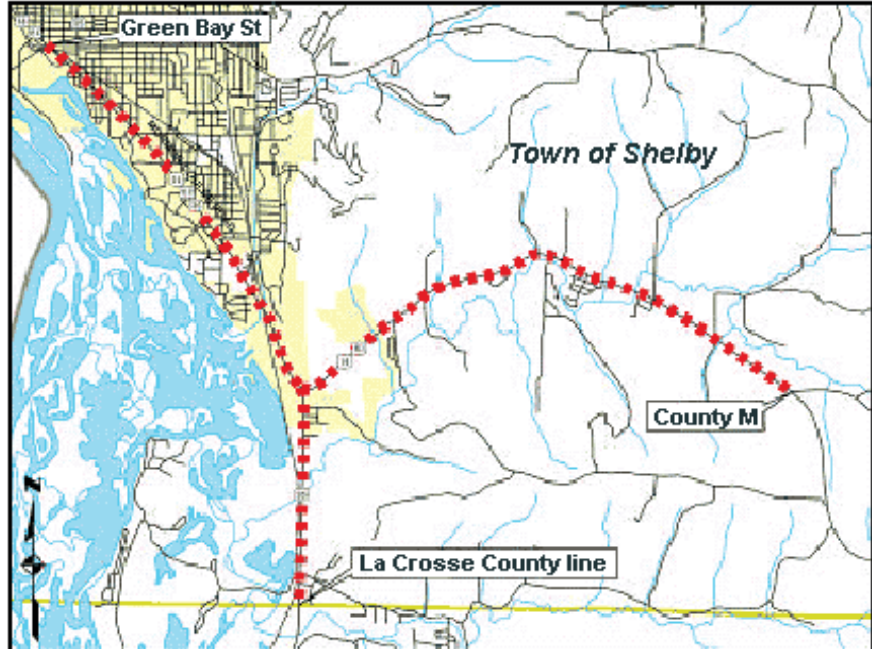
- WIS 35 from the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection to the La Crosse County line (near Goose Island).
- US 14/61 from the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection to the junction with County M (near Ten Mile Hill).

Timing for future four-lane construction on the rural segments will be examined using updated traffic counts and forecasts.

In addition to analyzing data on traffic and safety, the South La Crosse transportation study team is collaborating with citizens to develop a long-term vision for the region's transportation system, particularly seeking public input on transit, bicycle and pedestrian issues. By considering the local views of area residents and business owners, the study team will be able to better identify and address existing and emerging issues.

There have been, and continue to be, many opportunities for citizens to get involved in the South La Crosse transportation study, including:

- **A Local Information Center** on January 6, 2005. Residents and visitors can learn about the corridor planning process and contribute their ideas. See back page for details.
- **Public information meetings** to gather citizen input and present findings. The first meeting took place in September 2004 and allowed citizens to provide early input on corridor needs and issues. The next meeting will be in spring 2005.
- **A survey of businesses** on or near South Avenue and Mormon Coulee Road regarding perceptions of transportation issues, land use and access. It was completed in August 2004.
- **A Multi-modal Field Guide** leading citizens on a tour through the corridor to identify issues relating to walking, bicycling and transit. It was conducted in fall 2004.
- **A telephone survey of area residents** to identify attitudes toward a variety of corridor issues. The survey was completed in June 2004, and focused on congestion, aesthetics and non-automobile transportation.



Study schedule:

July to September 2004: Data collection and inventory of existing conditions

October 2004 to May 2005: Plan development and range of improvement concepts

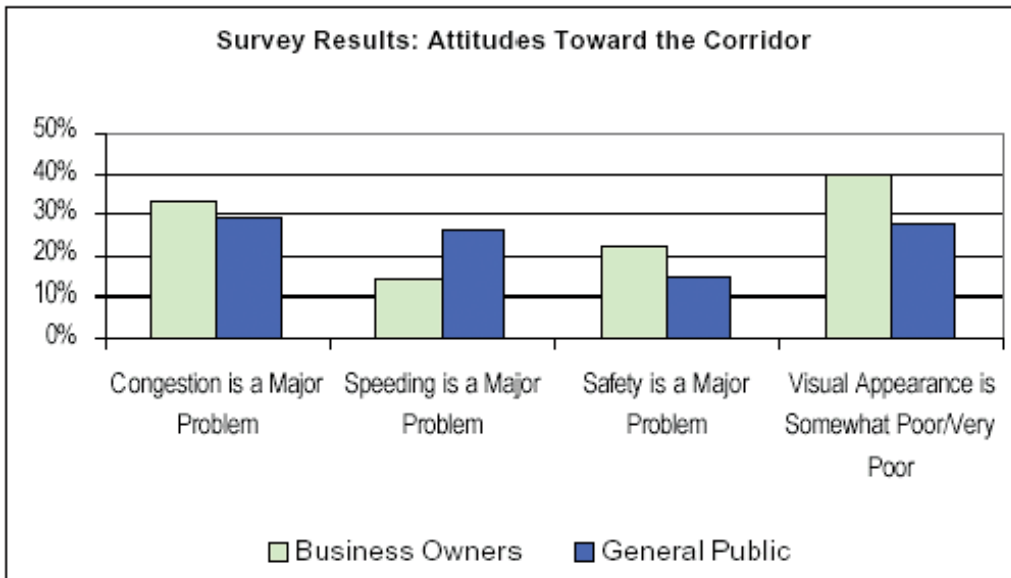
April to May 2005: Draft plan

June to July 2005: Final plan



Public opinion counts

Issues identified by the public will help the study team focus its analysis of traffic, land use and other conditions on South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road and throughout the study area. These pages outline the perceptions of survey respondents, field guide participants, meeting attendees, businesses and other citizens toward transportation conditions in the South La Crosse transportation study corridor area.



Overall impressions

In general, both business owners and the public have a relatively favorable impression of South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road.

Majorities believe that there are no problems or only minor problems with speeding traffic, congestion, overall safety and noise.

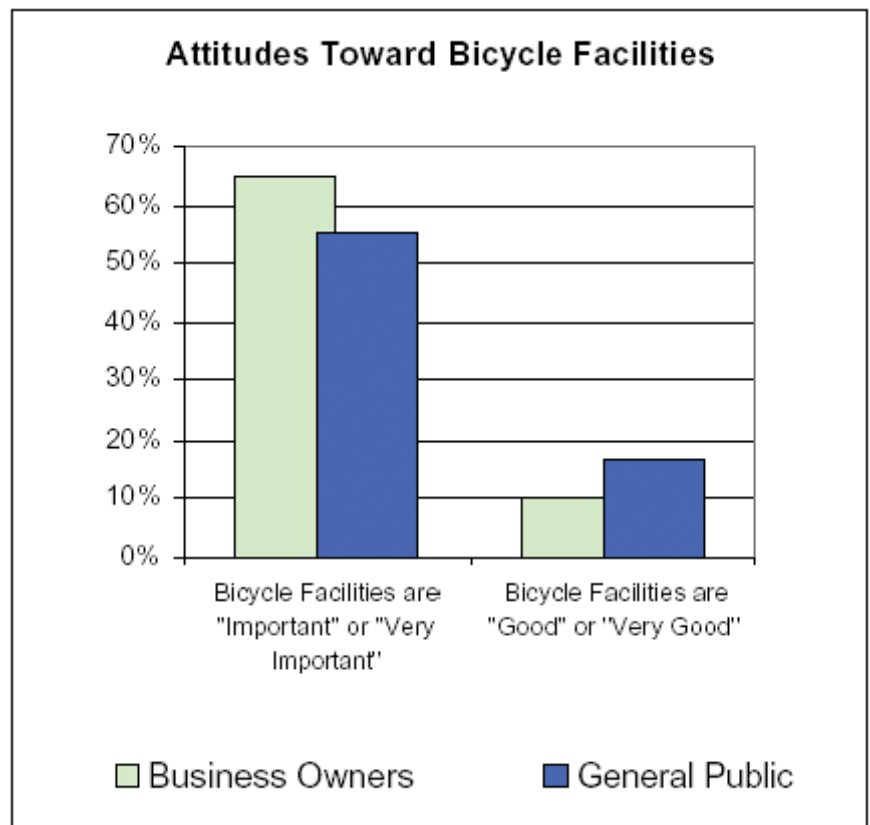
Nearly 40 percent believe that the visual appearance of the area is "somewhat poor" to "very poor." Business owners are more concerned about the aesthetics of the area than is the general public.

Facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians and bus riders

As one person who attended the first public information meeting noted: "there is too much traffic not to have [better] accommodations [for walkers and bikers]. There are a fair number of pedestrians, joggers and bikers, and better accommodations increase their safety as well as that of the motorist."

Both business owners and the public believe that it is important to provide facilities for pedestrians, transit users and bicyclists, but do not feel amenities of adequate quality are provided in the corridor. In particular, they feel that bicycle lanes, trails and bike racks need improvement.

The general public sees a greater need for transit facility improvements while area business owners feel that pedestrian enhancements are important. In fact, a majority of respondents in both surveys rate the quality of street amenities – benches, landscaping and bike racks, for example – as "poor" or "very poor," and that the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians using the corridor is not adequately provided for.

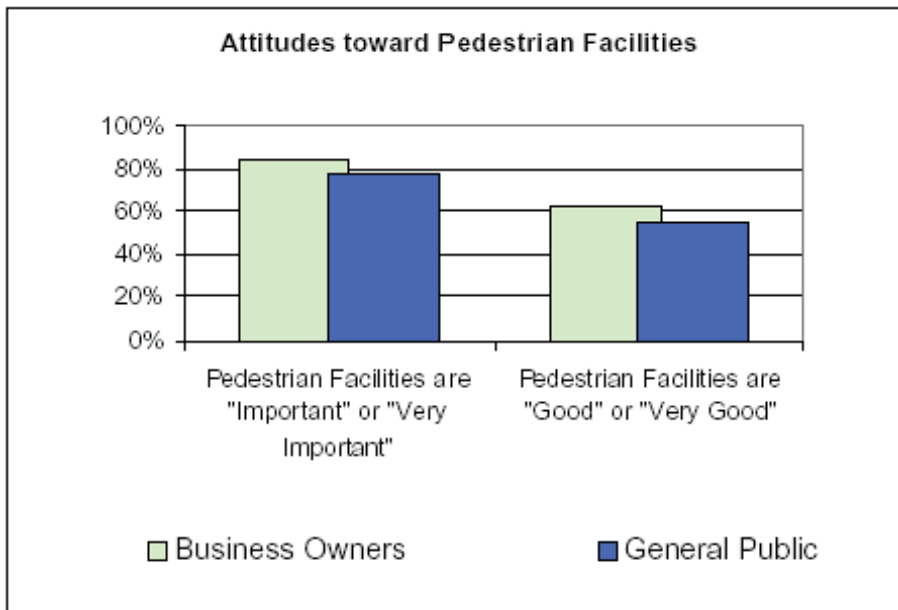


Specific issues facing pedestrians and bicyclists

Area residents who took the self-guided tour of the corridor provided more detailed impressions of corridor conditions for pedestrians, bike riders and transit users.

Many feel that sidewalks and bus stops are slightly better than average, but that crosswalks and bicycle lanes are worse than average. They also noted that it is difficult or dangerous for pedestrians to cross the street in many parts of the study area. They feel this is due to:

- High traffic volume and fast speeds on South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road.
- Motorists who fail to yield to pedestrians crossing the street, particularly while turning right.
- Pedestrian signal timing that is too short.
- Refuge islands that are too narrow to offer safety.
- Complicated, confusing intersections — particularly where more than two streets meet — that take too long to cross.
- Crosswalks spaced too far apart.



Pedestrian walkway at Riverfront Center

Additionally, field guide participants perceived problems with the locations of bus stops, some of which require long walks. Though they all like the quality of the Pammel Creek bicycle trail, they feel it is inadequately connected to the corridor.

They also commented on the overall environment for pedestrians, noting that in many places the sidewalks directly abut traffic lanes, with no buffer or landscaping, leaving pedestrians exposed to noise and fast traffic.

Finally, participants noticed a number of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists that impressed them. They liked the pedestrian walkway — including a raised crosswalk — leading from the Riverfront Center to the bus stop, as well as the pedestrian bridge over Pammel Creek near the Rivercrest Mobil Home Park and the pedestrian gate in the fence behind Wal-Mart.

What happens next?

The perceptions of survey respondents, field guide participants and people who comment at public meetings will help identify issues that may need to be addressed by study improvement concepts. Preliminary findings for the long-term vision of the corridor will be available for review and comment at the Local Information Center to be held on January 6, 2005 (see back page for details).

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Do you know someone who may be interested in this study? Please share this newsletter. If you would like more copies, contact project manager Beth Price at (608) 785-9045.

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Local Information Center January 6

Please visit the South La Crosse transportation study's Local Information Center, to be held Thursday, January 6, 2005.

The Local Information Center will be centrally located in the study corridor, at Quillin's Foodfest, 3954 Mormon Coulee Road in La Crosse. The center will be open from 4 to 7 p.m. as an informal open house.

At the Local Information Center, you'll be able to view findings from the early phases of the study along with preliminary concepts for the corridor. You will also be able to talk with project staff to comment on any aspect of the study or to share your vision for the corridor.

